

MODERN FREETHINKER



A person who talks about experiencing something beyond the normal channels of perception is really mentally sick. Such perceptions are due to mere hallucination.

—Abraham Thomas Kovoov

From the letters

One Lakh Challenge :

Your challenge of Rs. One Lakh has aroused much enthusiasm among many, especially after its publication in the "Illustrated Weekly of India" and "Sarira". If local godmen claim miraculous powers, how should we proceed to bring them in the book?

—Ravinder Kumar
Hissar

Ask the 'godman' to make a draft of Rs. 1000 in favour of "Indian Rationalist Association." Then he/she should specify the exact 'miracle' which he/she wants to perform out of the twenty two items listed in my challenge. Then we will arrange the venue and date in consultation with the 'godman', and if he succeeds, in performing the feat in *fraud proof conditions*, he bags Rs. One lakh. But if the 'godman' fails, he naturally is exposed as a cheat and loses the deposit of Rs. 1000 to 'Indian Rationalist Association'. Needless to say that those 'godmen' who are not courageous enough to undergo our test, are deceiving the public.

—Editor

Should have regularity

Modern Freethinker is doing quite a good work ; but you should have regularity in its publication.

—K. A. Ahmed
Bangalore

Media time

The electronic media which is totally controlled by the government gives time to every odd religious festival and reciting of religious texts. Either this notorious practice should be stopped or the rationalists should be given time to propagate their views.

—K. S. Vijayan
Coimbatore

The price

How do you manage to sell Modern Freethinker for Re. one ? It would be better if you increase the number of pages, and nobody expects you to sell it at this incredibly low price. You may increase it to Rs. 2 or Rs. 3.

—Manuel D'Souza
Bombay

Fine reading

Joseph Edamaruku's "Rationalist State" offers fine reading with deep understanding. How simply he explains things !

—Hariharan P. K.
Mangalore

Modern Freethinker

MODERN FREETHINKER

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Indian Rationalist
Association

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Should Atheist Rationalist publishers imitate Bible Society ?

— Sanal Edamaruku

"Why Atheist/Rationalist publishers 'price' books ?" "Why can't you distribute books free of price or at nominal prices as the Bible Society does it ?" These are frequently asked questions which I had to face.

There is a fundamental difference between the activities of the Bible Society and the publishing houses that popularise rationalism. To my knowledge, no rationalist publication venture in India is financially supported from abroad. Whereas the Bible Society in our country is funded by the billion dollar United Bible Society based in London and New York. Millions of Bibles are sent by foreign associates to the Bible Society free of charge. These are also exempt from Indian Customs duty, being printed material. Even when they price it too low, they make substantial profits. Many of these Bibles are distributed free to school children, who use the sheets to make toy boats ; and supplied in hotel rooms alongwith toilet papers, which majority throw away to its right place—the dust bin. Truly, the Atheist/Rationalist publishers cannot afford to have a luxury of that sort.

The Bible Society is engaged in a shady business and precisely that is the reason behind the recent raid by Finance Ministry officials at the premises of the Bible Society of India at Bangalore. The officials seized incriminating documents weighing more than a tonne.

The Bible Society is the second largest printer and publisher of written material in the country, after the Government of India. For all practical purposes, it is a printing and publishing business

interested in profits, though it has been going "scot free" as it functions under the label of a missionary institution. Activities of this notorious society have been depriving the country of a minimum of Rs. 14,00,000 in foreign currency a year since 1981, when Home Ministry officials raided its premises. In addition to the foreign exchange involved, the Bible Society possess crores of rupees, generated by the sale of books which they obtain free. Accounting of these rupee funds has also been under cloud for long.

The newspapers of late July this year reported that government sleuths have discovered that foreign sources would send to the Bible Society only three quarters of the money they publicly declared, the remaining 25 per cent being kept abroad to the spent on foreign tours of officials. As back as in 1981, a CBI raid discovered that the Society executives were selling hundreds of tonnes of high quality paper in the black market, which had been sent as gifts by the society's foreign associates.

The Atheist/Rationalist publishers are in no way ready to imitate the style of functioning of the Bible Society. We are doing quite an unpopular work but are at it with utter determination and true commitment. And the funds have to be raised from itself. There is no second way for the Atheist/Rationalist publications.

IRA DELHI STATE COMMITTEE

A meeting of the members and activists of the Rationalist Association of Delhi was held on 9th August at the head quarters of the association. The meeting decided that a symposium on "Secularisation of Public Life" be held at Delhi as early as possible.

The new state committee elected includes Joseph Edamaruku (President), Ramesh V. S. (Vice-President), Sudhamsu Sekhar (Secretary), Balachandran and Ravi (Joint Secretaries).

Only Brahmins Plant a Cocoanut in Orissa

Sudhamsu Sekhar

In the religious ceremonies of the Hindus, cocoanut is used as a good omen. But except in the coastal areas of India, we hardly find a cocoanut tree ; the reason being, it has a close relation with salt and coastal atmosphere. Hence it is very difficult to keep alive a cocoanut plant at places far from sea breeze. In every month, after the maturity of this tree, it fruits a bunch of cocoanuts. So throughout the year this tree gives edible and seed cocoanut. But generally the seed cocoanut is preserved during the month of November & December. It takes 5 to 6 months for germination. So the seed of November-December germinate during May-June, which is rainy season suitable for plantation of any tree.

In Orissa, common people do not dare to plant a cocoanut tree and even if one requests a worker to plant a cocoanut tree he will refuse to do so. The reason being, in Orissa, people believe that the planting of this tree does not suit to all due to "Ganda dosa". According to them, only those who are free from Ganda dosa and Brahmins can plant it ; otherwise, they believe, before its flowering, the concerned person will die. And the interesting thing is that there is no way to find whether one is free from "Ganda dosa" or not. Precisely the Brahmins enjoy this power of plantation. When the common people desire to plant the cocoanut tree, they have to satisfy a Brahmin for its plantation.

Many in modern times do not believe in this ; but even they do not plant a cocoanut because they do not want to do an experiment, where their lives are involved.

Not only in Orissa, cocoanut grows plenty in our country from Andaman & Nicobar Islands to the whole coastal areas. Among all the coastal states of India, Kerala produces the maximum cocoanuts, that is 70% of total production in this country. The meaning of Kerala itself is "place where cocoanuts grow abundantly."

In Kerala, cocoanut oil and cocoanut pulp are used while cooking food. If one says in Kerala that the planting of cocoanut never suits all people, they will surely laugh at it ; because in Kerala any one and every one can plant a cocoanut.

At Orissa, we tell people, that there is no relation between a planted tree and a person who planted it. They are unable to understand that there is no physical or structural difference between the body of the Brahmin and that of a non Brahmin. Accidental deaths are always connected with the plantation of cocoanut trees.

Systematic campaign is required in Orissa to break this superstitious belief. Rationalists are active at it.

Kovoor Day on September 18

Professor Abraham Thomas Kovoor, the renowned rationalist and crusader against superstitions, died on 18th of September, 1978. On death, as per his will, his eyes were donated to two blind boys and the dead body was handed over to a medical college for anatomical studies of students.

We request rationalist friends to organise memorial meetings ; and to register their eye donation on September 18 to mark Kovoor's death anniversary.

Report

Andhra Pradesh State Rationalist Conference

The state conference of Indian Rationalist Association's Andhra Pradesh wing was held on 14th of June, 1987 at Ambedkar Bhavan, Guntur. The Conference was inaugurated by Dr. J. Gowrishankar, (Scientist at Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology of Hyderabad). Lokayukta Avula Sambasiva Rao (former Vice-chancellor of Andhra University and former Chief Justice of Andhra High Court) presided over the inaugural session. Sanal Edamaruku (General Secretary, IRA), M. V. Ramamurthy (President, IRA), Ravipudi Venkatadri (Vice-President, IRA) and Malladi Subbamma (Vice-President, APRA) were the speakers at the inaugural session. Mr. B. L. S. Varaprasad presented the annual administration report of the state organisation. Dr. T. Prabhakar Rao welcomed the guests while K. Chandrasekhar proposed a vote of thanks.

The Business Session of the association was held in the afternoon. Mr. Ravipudi Venkatadri was elected the new state committee president, and Mr. B. L. S. Varaprasad the General Secretary. (A full list of the committee will appear in the next issue of *Modern Freethinker*).

A public meeting was also held in the evening. M. V. Ramamurthy, Sanal Edamaruku, Ravipudi Venkatadri, B. L. S. Varaprasad, Malladi Subbamma, and Dr. T. Prabhakara Rao were the speakers. A "Miracle" Exposure programme was also held in the evening.

Earlier, during the inaugural session, Sanal Edamaruku released a Telugu book namely "Rationalism vs. Marxism" written by Gumma Veeranna.

Announcement

IRA National Conference

On 12th & 13th September 1987

At Ernakulam (Kerala)

The 14th National Conference of Indian Rationalist Association and the State Conference that marks the 31st year of the formation of Kerala's Rationalist Association will be held together on 12th and 13th of September 1987. The venue of the public sessions are at the Public Library Hall, Ernakulam, Kerala.

The Conference will be inaugurated by Sai Paranjpye, noted film director and rationalist, and also a grand daughter Dr. R. P. Paranjpye (who was one of the founders of the Modern Rationalist movement in the country, during 1920's.)

There will be three symposia on 12th September. The topics are as follows :

1. Problems of building up rationalist state and society.
2. Why Dialectical Materialism is unscientific ?
3. Freedom of Thought and Expression - in Art and Politics.

A 'Miracle' Exposure Training programme is scheduled for the delegates on the evening of 12th September.

The Business Sessions of the National and State Rationalist Associations will be held on 13th September.

Rationalists who are interested to attend the Conference are requested to write to the Central Office well in advance, in the following address.

Conference - in - charge,
Indian Rationalist Association
Post Box No. 2713
Karol Bagh, New Delhi - 110 005

State units and affiliated local rationalist associations are requested to send the list of official delegates to attend the Conference, to the above address, before 25th August 1987.

A World Government should be aimed at . . .

—Varkey Shantistan

Rationalism may start as a way of thinking. But its fulfilment is in a way of life. It should be the earnest endeavour of all rationalists to live out a life according to the truth they have grasped, as a result of their rational thinking. Forbearance and tolerance must be the hallmark of rationalism. At the same time a rationalist must not be a coward. He must not be cowed down by the bluff of the religionists. He must stand up for his rights and set the record right with his antagonists. He must use the mildest of words to expound the most explosive of ideas. His propaganda should be like the propaganda of the rose, through the fragrance of his life.

The rationalists are quite aware of the heavy odds they have to struggle against. Behind organised religions are the vested interests of the dominant exploiting class. They have abundant resources at their disposal, wealth, power, mass media etc. Art, music, drama, literature etc all enter into their service, and the culture so built up reflects their interest. This culture that suits the interests of the exploiters and organised religions permeate the entire fabric of life and cancerous growth so much so that one cannot eliminate religion without eliminating the cure. It is no easy task to reconstruct such vitiated and one sided culture ridding it for its exploitative elements and retaining the healthy elements having survival value. No surgical operation is practical either in case of the cancer patient or in the case of the religion dominated culture. How to get rid of cancer without killing the patient is the real problem. Perhaps the only course open is to build up slowly and systematically another secular culture on the sure foundations of some sort of democratic socialism and scientific humanism, a historic process that may take generations to bear fruits.

(Continued on page 18)

Sleep and Sex as Basic Requirements

—Joseph Edamaruku

We have been carrying the English translation of Joseph Edamaruku's famous work "Rationalist State" for last five issues. A part of the 2nd chapter on basic requirements is given in this issue. And the rest will be carried in the forthcoming issues.

—Editor

Sleep is an unavoidable need of man and beast. It is nature's gift or arrangement for the relaxation of body and mind. But this very same sleep is a source of haunting fear. Many people go to sleep with fears of demons and monsters harassing them in sleep and causing to dream horrible and fantastic dreams; for they have heard such stories. Many people are afraid to sleep in a room alone. Superstitious people give currency to the stories that evil spirits, demons and ghosts would come out in darkness. So, some people get terrified if they wake up in the night.

Religious and superstitious people wax eloquent about such stories by exploiting the ignorance of man regarding sleep and the dreams that are seen while sleeping. We forget our surroundings during sleep. There is a difference between this state and unconsciousness. We will wake up from sleep if there is extra ordinary sound or light. Sometimes we wake up, seeing dreams; some people rise up and walk about while they dream.

Those primitive men who were ignorant of the meaning of all these, assigned their own reasons to every such experience according to their light. These unfounded and unscientific notions are kept up still as established truths. The confusions caused by this are immense.

There are two states of sleep; sound sleep and light sleep. In eight hours' sleep these two states will come alternatively. We have to examine the repulsions produced in a superstitious man by the dreams he sees in the intermittent light sleep. Most people do not know when to sleep and how long to sleep. There are people who think that it is harmful to forego sleep in the night. This is a mistaken idea. How long to sleep is to be determined on the basis of each one's age and state of health. Those who work in night shifts in factories go to sleep in the day time. Scientists say that there is no particular time for sleep; only that one should have adequate sleep.

Generally a man sleeps from seven to eight hours. Some people require only 6 hours sleep. All this may change from time to time according to the physical conditions and fatigue. Anyway no one needs more than nine hours sleep. Those who sleep unnecessarily long tend to become inert and idle. To sleep only as long as necessary and to spend the extra time in some useful work or in reading good books will help one to prosper. What if one finds it impossible to sleep? Indigestion and the excessive drinking of coffee may cause sleeplessness.

Not to allow to go to sleep at the wanted time is a cruel torture. In many countries, the police use this method to torture the accused. If one is denied sleep for three or four consecutive days, he will fail to concentrate on any matter. The ability to think and see and hear will grow less. One will grow incapable to distinguish between actual events and day dreams. Some may find it impossible to speak a complete sentence. Some others may develop mental alterations. It was usual for Christian church in the middle ages to drive people to such conditions to extract confessions. In modern days also easy going policemen resort to this method.

Sleep has paved the way for innumerable superstitions. There are no men who do not have dreams in sleep. Until modern psychology developed, people had no idea about the whys of dreams. They mistook dreams as revelations. Men who saw the dead dear ones in dreams thought of a life and a world after death. They imagined that their dear ones

came to them from there. In all the religious books there are evidences for the ancient belief of the people that God and divine persons or spirits would appear to them in dreams to give commands or instructions.

"But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife."

(Mathew 1:20)

The above shows that men had mistaken dreams to be revelations. In the Old Testament there are quite a number of occasions where dreams and their interpretations are spoken of. There are similar descriptions in the Quran and Hadits. The Indians believed that there were evil dreams and good dreams and that they were suggestive of future events. According to them, the results of dreams of the first quarter of the night would come to pass within one year; the second quarter within six months; the third quarter within 3 months and the last quarter within 15 days. This was the view of the Indian interpreters of dreams. Those are mere imaginations without any proof. They interpreted dreams relating to the things they saw in dreams.

Psychologists have established that all people see dreams and only some of them are remembered. It is sheer absurdity to say that dreams have any bearing on the future.

Psychologists usually analyse dreams to examine the mental conditions of people. That is not for telling the future nor for ascertaining the longevity of life.

It is opportune here to dwell a little phenomenon of somnambulism. There are people who feel that they are beckoned by someone and as a result they follow him for some distance. The belief is that it is some evil spirit or devil that beckons. But this is only the consequence of the mental disease called somnambulism. This is seen more among grown up men. It might be after walking for sometime that one wakes up. Some somnambulists, after walking inside or outside the room for a

while return and continue to sleep. The primitive people could comprehend all this only as the work of evil spirits.

Now-a-days, if one is affected by somnambulism one is taken to a psychiatrist.

As the psychologists have made detailed studies about dreams, it is redundant to explain their origin here. It is usual for all people to see dreams in light sleep or half sleep. There is nothing in them to foretell the future. To say otherwise is utterly unscientific and superstitious.

Sex is one of the innate instincts of both man and beast except certain species in the initial stages of evolution. All other species manage multiplication of species by sexual relations. Most beasts have specific seasons in the year for excitement of sexual passion. But not so with men. They have sexual propensities turn out all the seasons. Nature intends copulation only for multiplication of species. But man who has conquered nature in other respects has taken a free stand in this regard also. Besides copulating for reproduction only, they indulge in sexual intercourse for the sheer pleasure and delight of it. Some people advocate the view that sexual relations should be strictly confined to reproduction alone. This argument is totally unscientific as is the argument that taking food is only for quenching hunger and caring for its taste is wrong. People enter into sexual relations for emotional relaxation, to keep up the unity of man and wife, for the sex cohesion of the family, and above all for enjoying the blissful moments of its consummation. Every man has a right to the supreme joy of copulation. But large groups of society are denied this right for this or that reason. Some of them engrossed in the vortex of complex social ties and prevented from marrying. Priests and nuns keep away from wedlock, and the church exploit them. Just as these people without paying heed to their wishes are mechanically compelled to keep away from copulation, so are others, whether they want it or not, forced to have sexual relations. Temple prostitutes known as Deva Dasis and the dwellers of the red streets come under this category. They are constrained to enter into sexual relations

not for enjoyment, not for the increase of the species. Though not exactly of this nature, there are many similar inequities in this field; child marriage, forced marriages etc. are examples.

Only if the partners in sexual intercourse are in agreement and mutually interested in, will they be able to get genuine enjoyment and real satisfaction. Any kind of compulsion here is an attack on the freedom of the individual. I do not mean by this that any man is free to indulge in sexual intercourse with anyone willing to co-operate. Before man go off out the animal stage his freedom in sexual affairs was not much controlled. Even today this freedom survives among tribals. In the Solomon Island in the Pacific Ocean, any girl who has attained puberty is free to mate with any male. The Yakut tribe of Ghana in Africa also allows this kind of free sex. Inside the tribe any man can take any woman. In some of the Caribbean tribes also this kind of freedom exists.

Differences exist not only in sexual freedom, but there are differences in sex etiquette. In rural India, males shaking hands with females or vice-versa is wrong. An Indian cannot brook the idea of a male and female outside wedlock kissing each other. But in Europe and America the concept is different. While travelling in a bus, it is seen in Kerala that some seats remain vacant, for, the next seat is occupied by a female or vice-versa. I am not sure whether this etiquette is practiced anywhere else in the world.

All these are manners and taboos connected with some beliefs, customs and backgrounds. They have sprung up in circumstances. Many of them are in the process of change.

Whatever be the freedoms permitted in behaviour, actual sexual relations are carried on in all modern societies with utmost secrecy. But still it is not so among the tribals of Andamans. They discard society. If the persons feel like it, they will copulate even before the eyes of others. Certain tribes in Fiji also do like wise. In the island of Tati, sexual intercourses are organised for the royal women to see and enjoy. In some places there are social laws that the newly wed couple should perform their first intercourse in the presence of

women and girls. Some people stretch hospitality to the length of sending their wives to sleep with the guests. If the husband is out on tour women can entertain strangers, so think some people. A single wife for many brothers, was custom even in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

All of which shows that in some societies there is total absence of any restraint or control regarding sexual relation or sex etiquette. At the same time certain religions do not allow even the legitimate freedom in this respect. A section of Christians think it sin to have sexual passions. There are people who consider it wrong to see one's own sex organs. There are those amongst us who say that sexual relations impair health ; that sexual urges must be suppressed ; and that avoiding and giving up sexual relations will improve health and intelligence and prolonged life. All these prove that there are more superstitions and ignorance in this sphere of life than in many other spheres. What is the stand of a rationalist here ? To say that sexual morality is the contribution of a particular religion is quite unfounded. Neither can we concede that sexual relations are sinful. It is unscientific to argue that sex is unhealthy and that abstaining is a noble thing. Sex is a physical need. That will give joy and delight to the pair. If for any reason it is suppressed, it is harmful to body and mind. That does not mean that there must be no care or control imposed on it. The primitive wildman as in all other respects, made many an experiment in man-woman relations. And now modern society is built on the family where one husband, one wife, is the cardinal principle. Sexual relations between the couple according to the needs and likes and dislikes are not deemed to be wrong. Traditions and ignorance stand blocking enjoyment of marital life, for the prejudices and beliefs created by Sunday schools, preachers, priests and religious authorities cause confusions and chaos.

Increase of species is only one of the aims of sex relations. Sex relations with the aid of contraceptives are not against modern morality. Such was not the state of affairs fifty years back. It is certain that there will be people who decide not to

have even a single offspring in the times to come. A stage will come when population increase has to be checked. Then those who decide to have no children will be acclaimed. When individual freedom and economic independence become the order of the day, the present rampant profession of prostitution will come to an end.

In a rationalist society men and women will be accepted as equals ; there shall be no coercive ordering on people and no rigid controls that are unscientific regarding sex relations. These relations should be based not on sin or virtue, but on the likes and dislikes of individuals. Man and woman will cohabit as long as they like to. If they choose to separate, they must have the freedom to separate and to accept new partners. I know that some people may become sceptical about this. The sanctity of such a freedom on the ground that it will bring about anarchy in sex relations is not right. In Russia where the law of divorce is most liberal, divorces are very much fewer than elsewhere. Freedom does not cause chaos in any field including in sexual relations.

In addition to sex relations between the two sexes, homosexuality among both males and females is very common in Europe and America. In many countries, homosexuality had been declared illegal, dubbing it as sexual perversion. But now the law has been liberalised at many places. There are even newspaper reports that marriages have been contracted between man and man and woman and woman. If two individuals of the same sex want to cohabit, society has no right to prevent them from it.

Because religions teach that sexual urges or passions are wrong, a large number of youngsters are caught up in an unnecessary guilt complex. Consequently, they suffer from mental ailments. It is in the hey days of youth or boyhood that sexual urges get stronger. Sexual dreams frequently occur those days. Together with the dreams, or as a result, emissions too take place. This is but a physical phenomenon. Quacks make capital out of it by declaring it to be a disease to be immediately treated. Similarly, there exists many wrong ideas about

menstruation. There is a practice to keep apart women during the days of menstruation. It is nothing unlike a physical function like secretion or urination.

Also there is no substance in saying that masturbation is sinful and wrong. In certain age most people lapse in this habit. Medicalmen do not agree with this argument. Not only masturbation but an excess of anything is injurious. Taking excessive food will cause ill-health; that does not deter people from taking food. As temperance is advisable in all matters so is it with regard to sex.

Now people are inhibited from thinking and talking about sex as the topic is considered indecent. Such inhibitions have to be given up without glory.

Sex is a vital affair in man's life. Boys and girls must be given scientific sexual education in schools. This will help to mould a generation of mental health.

Also people should have the unrestricted freedom to choose partners irrespective of their caste, religion, language or race.

(Continued from page 10)

Exploitation by religions leads to other forms of exploitation, economic, political and social. Owing to such exploitation, many serious problems have cropped up in the world today such as gross income disparity, political domination, armament stockpiling, world wars etc. And because of our unscientific attitude to life we have not been able to solve these problems. So, it is the duty of rationalists to go beyond the religious field, and investigate these problems, analyse their causes, and prescribe remedies, all in the light of reason and tune with the tenets of science.

It is astonishing to note that to what extent the folly of man can go in the absence of a scientific approach to life and its problems. Take for example the question of world peace. The nations of the world now spend about 600 billion dollars a year on armaments

and have acquired nuclear weaponry sufficient to destroy the world a hundred times over. After the Second World War, about 6500 World Disarmament Conferences have been held; but the outcome has been a big zero. It should be clear even to children that in the absence of international laws and a world authority to settle disputes among nations and implement such settlements, there is bound to be nothing but chaos and anarchy in the international sphere. It should be clear as day light that all talks of armament reduction and disarmament are exercises in futility as long as no world authority is set up. The world now seems to bank upon the leaders of the two super powers to ensure world peace as if it were their personal matter. World peace is too big an issue to be left to two individuals, however great they might be, even a child will know. It should be clear to any sensible person that as things are in the world today, the best forms to work for world peace is the United Nations Organisation, howsoever defective it may be. True it is a creature of the big power govts and not a peoples organisation and that in spite of its remarkable achievement in the non-political sphere, such as health, education, culture etc, it has achieved nothing in the political field, namely in settling disputes among nations and thereby to prevent wars, for which objective it was formed. It must also be admitted that as long as the Big Power Veto remains, the U. N. O. will be hundred percent non-functioning. Still it is very clear that if the peoples of the world make up their minds, it can be reformed from within and restructured into a skeleton world government which can establish world peace.

Once we get rid of our obsession that god is above and that everything will be O. K. below, and make a rational approach to life, there will be no problem created by man that cannot be solved by man.

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